



**SAFER SCHOOLS AND CAMPUSES
BEST PRACTICES
CLEARINGHOUSE**

Lessons from the Field - Returning to School: Strategies for Supporting Staff

Wednesday, July 28, 2021 | 3:00 - 4:15 PM ET

SPEAKER BIOS

Christian Rhodes

Chief of Staff, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

Mr. Christian Rhodes served as Chief of Staff for Prince George's County Public Schools. In this role, Mr. Rhodes supported the chief executive officer through management of specific business functions of the school system. He began his career as a political organizer for the Maryland State Teachers Association, a state affiliate of the National Education Association, and education advisor Office of the Prince George's County Executive. Mr. Rhodes has a Master of Public Administration degree from the American University in Washington, D.C., and a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Loredana Valtierra

Special Assistant, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, U.S. Department of Education

Ms. Loredana Valtierra was recently education policy counsel for the House Committee on Education and Labor under Chairman Bobby Scott and worked on K-12 and juvenile justice policy. Prior to her position on the Committee, Ms. Valtierra worked to promote equitable school policies for girls of color and represented pregnant and parenting students at the National Women's Law Center. She has also represented immigrant children and families and is a former 7th grade English teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School.

Jyotsna Blackwell

Public Health Advisor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Ms. Jyotsna Blackwell joined the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Public Health Advisor ten years ago. She works in the Division of Population Health, Healthy Schools Branch and serves as a Project Officer for Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Oklahoma. She managed the National Center for Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) contract that assisted in developing the school employee wellness guide: [Healthy School, Healthy Staff, Healthy Students](#). She provided oversight in the development of the framework, served as part of the advisory group, and conducted reviews of the guide. Prior to her work at the CDC, for more than 13 years, Ms. Blackwell was the program manager for the Office of Chronic Disease Prevention unit in the Health Assessment and Promotion Department of the DeKalb County Board of Health (GA). Ms. Blackwell earned her master's degree from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health.

Sangeeta Parikshak

Behavioral Health Lead, Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Sangeeta Parikshak, Ph.D., a licensed clinical-child psychologist, is a Social Science Analyst in the Office of Head Start at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In this position she serves as the lead for early childhood behavioral health, providing leadership on mental health and substance use issues that impact staff, children, and families in Head Start and across early childhood education programs. Prior to coming to ACF, Dr. Parikshak worked as a mental health practitioner and as a staffer for Senator Whitehouse's behavioral health portfolio. She received her doctorate from the University of Kansas and completed her clinical internship at Children's Hospital Boston.

Kathy McHugh

Teacher, Delran Township Public Schools, NJ

Ms. Kathy McHugh is a veteran Kindergarten teacher at Millbridge Elementary School, in Delran, New Jersey. As a second career teacher, Ms. McHugh joined Delran Township Public Schools in 2004 and has been recognized by the New Jersey Governor's Teacher Recognition Program as a Burlington County Teacher of the Year in 2014. Ms. McHugh is the Recording Secretary for the Delran Education Association, part of the DEA's Executive Council and Co-Chair of the Delran District Leadership Team, partnering with Dr. Brian Brotschul, Ed. D., Delran's Superintendent of Schools. She also works with Dr. Brotschul and Saul Rubinstein, Professor in Rutgers School of Labor and Management, as a Facilitator in the New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative.